

Message for U.S. Citizens: Unhealthy Air Conditions in Malaysia

September 14, 2015

According to the Malaysian Department of Environment, many areas throughout Malaysia are currently suffering from air pollutants (haze) in the “unhealthy” or “very unhealthy” ranges caused by smoke from burning in Indonesia and Malaysia. Updated information on air quality levels in Malaysia may be obtained from the Department’s website (in English) at:

<http://apims.doe.gov.my/apims/hourly2.php>

Air quality is considered to be good at air quality index (AQI) levels of up to 50. The air quality level in Kuala Lumpur as of 11:00 a.m. on September 14, 2015 was 151, which is in the EPA’s unhealthful AQI range, a level at which everyone may begin to experience health effects, and members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

The U.S. EPA notes the following:

- Prolonged exposure to unhealthy levels for sensitive groups (AQI 100-150) may cause people with chronic lung or heart diseases, as well as infants and the very old and anyone already suffering from an acute illness such as influenza (“the flu”) to become sick or may worsen existing symptoms.
- Prolonged exposure to unhealthy levels (AQI 151-200) may cause respiratory problems in normally healthy individuals.
- Prolonged exposure to very unhealthy (AQI 201-300), or less-prolonged exposure to hazardous conditions (AQI >301) may lead to health problems in a wider range of individuals of all ages.

Mitigation of the Negative Effects of Pollution

The central principle of protection is *avoidance*. **The best protection against exposure to outdoor pollutants is to remain indoors as much as possible, with doors and windows closed and air conditioning on and to refrain from strenuous activity when outdoors.**

Particulate respirators, such as 3M N95s, may provide additional protection. However, N95s only protect against particulates in the air - not against gases and vapors. Paper masks or surgical masks provide little protection.

3M N95 Particulate Respirator

Persons with difficulty breathing due to the pollution, or those who must spend a significant amount of time outdoors, may choose to wear an N95 respirator for a level of some protection. If you have a history of difficulty breathing, first consult with a medical professional prior to wearing a respirator. A respirator will provide some protection against the particles in polluted air, but it will not provide complete protection.

Respirators and Children

N95 respirators are designed for use for adults and may not provide protection for children, particularly younger children. **During days with high pollution levels, children should be kept indoors as much as possible to minimize exposure.**

CDC link to Wildfire Smoke public health

recommendations: http://www.oehha.ca.gov/air/risk_assess/wildfirev8.pdf

CDC Link on Air Pollution and Respiratory Health:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/>

Air Quality Index Basics: <http://www.airnow.gov/?action=aqibasics.aqi>

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Malaysia enroll in the [Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](https://www.travel.state.gov) at www.travel.state.gov. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the [State Department's website](https://www.state.gov), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the [Country Specific Information for Malaysia](#). For additional information, refer to the ["Traveler's Checklist"](#) on the State Department's website.

Contact the embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is located at 376 Jalan Tun Razak 50400, Kuala Lumpur and is open 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you are a U.S. citizen and have any questions or concerns, please call the U.S. Embassy at (03) 2168-5000 or visit the U.S. Citizens Service website at malaysia.usembassy.gov. We will post the most updated information on the website.